

Inside the Ring

With the Great Fighters

By Charley White.

America's Best-Known and Greatest Referee Tells How Trial Bout With Tommy Ryan Led Kid Lavigne to Enter Ring and Later Win Championship.

NO. 4—KID LAVIGNE.
(Second Lightweight Champion.)

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OUT in Saginaw, Mich., there was a little fellow who stood day after day watching his big brother pile sack after sack of salt upon the barges that lined the canal. It was hard work, but the younger boy, anxious to be of some use to the family, decided that he would become one of the sack heavers at the first opportunity.

He was little George Lavigne, and the husky brother was big Billy. They were French Canadians. One day the boss came along and, seeing polypoid George, said that he would give him a job alongside the big brother. "You look like a strong kid. Tomorrow you show up at you go to work with Billy," said the boss. "I'll be on the job," said young Kid Lavigne, as he started home to tell the folks that he was to become a real man. For months he plucked away. At first the sacks proved very heavy for him, but his muscles grew rapidly, and at last he was able to hold his own with the best of the salt heavers.

Brother Billy was interested in boxing, and he was some good at it. He was a champion, and he was a fighter. He was a champion, and he was a fighter. He was a champion, and he was a fighter.

Boxed With Ryan
"Come on, Kid, you've got to go up and see me put the gloves on with Ryan," said Billy to smiling George as they finished dinner at home one night. "I want you to see how easy it is for a fellow who knows how to defend himself to grow away salt heaver."

George went along that night. Billy boxed with the great Tommy Ryan, and his prowess made some impression on good-natured George, but he wanted to see what he could do against Ryan. Ryan consented to put the gloves on with the kid so that "little George" could say that he'd boxed with the great Tommy Ryan.

"Punk! Bang! Bang!" went the Kid's glove against Ryan's body. Slap, bang, against his jaw.

Tommy Ryan had never been known

RYAN TRIED TO FLOOR THE "KID"



to let his sparring partners off in the least, and he couldn't understand why this kid was slugging him so hard. He looked over at brother Billy and whispered, "I'm going to slap this kid on the mouth, and he'll see that he's made a mistake."

Tommy did slap George across the face, but the youngster kept hitting as though he expected to knock out Ryan. Tommy became very sore. He slammed the Kid as hard as he could—right on the point of the jaw—but the Kid came back for more, and he hit Tommy so hard that Ryan was glad to even get out of the way.

Time and again Ryan tried his hardest to floor the youngster, but he was unable to accomplish the feat. Tommy thought the Kid might make a champion of his weight and encouraged him to learn all that he could of the game.

Fought Long Battle.

In 1908, George, or "the Saginaw Kid" as he had then become known, was experienced with men of the first calibre, was matched with and fought George Siddons of St. Paul. Siddons was then known as "the all-day fighter," and last fought long distance battles with many of the best men in the country at that time. Siddons, in fact, had never lost a knock-out and I don't believe in his long career, Siddons ever took the count.

The fight, fought with kid gloves, went seventy-seven rounds, and was called a draw. They were both terribly beaten up. Another match was made, and they fought fifty-five rounds for the featherweight championship of Michigan and a \$1000 prize. The fight was both men in such shape that neither one was able to continue when the fifty-first round was reached, and, like their first fight, it was called a draw.

From that time on, Kid Lavigne was a worthy challenger for the featherweight title, and he immediately challenged George Dixon, who then held the honor. "Kid's" next big fight was with the cleverest of all—Young Griffo, who was then considered the most prominent challenger for the honor held by George Dixon. Griffo was the marvel of the boxing world, and the "Kid's" nerve in taking on Griffo in a limited contest was commensurate with the light of previous fights. Griffo boxed an eight-round draw at Chicago.

"What did you think of the fight?" asked a fellow of the "Kid's" after the first few rounds. "I thought it was raining boxing gloves," replied Lavigne.

Lavigne came on to New York, and here he procured a manager in the person of Sam Fitzpatrick. I know

that they went boxing for matches, and at times it was hard to tell where the pair was to sleep, but Sam stuck to him as a shadow, and when he thought he had the right fellow in tow, at last Jim Kennedy, who was managing professional events of all sorts, gave the "Kid" a match with Jerry Marshall. They fought for a \$1000 purse at Coney Island and Lavigne was declared the winner in the tenth round.

Lavigne Made a Hit.

Then Kennedy, realizing that Lavigne had the class, matched him with Johnny Griffin. Lavigne won in fifteen rounds. That fight stamped the "Kid" as a corner and he was able to get all sorts of backing. However, he'd grown too heavy for the featherweight class and declared himself a lightweight.

Next Lavigne met Andy Bowen, the Southern champion. They fought at New Orleans. The "Kid" beat Bowen badly in the eighteenth round he dropped to the canvas and died of



TOM O'DOURKE SHOWED JOE BACK INTO THE RING

consensus of the brain. Lavigne, arrested on the charge of manslaughter, used all the money he had saved during his previous career and was discharged.

Lavigne was now considered a worthy opponent for McCalliffe, and he challenged the lightweight champion. About this time Joe Walcott popped up with a challenge of Ryan for the welterweight title. "The Black Demon" had been hot on the trail of all the heavyweights, including Tom Sharkey, but they were all slithering the Barbados wonder. Not so Lavigne.

The latter was matched. Walcott money showed up at 4 to 1. The men were to weigh in at the afternoon at 125 pounds, a \$1000 weight forfeit being posted.

They weighed in at a Turkish bath on the Bowery. I witnessed the weighing in, and commented on the appearance of the two men. Lavigne was the first to weigh. He got on the scales in his underclothes, laughing

and joking. He shook Walcott's hand and pleasantly remarked, "Well, Joe, I think I have it on you to-night."

O'Dourke, Walcott's manager, was offering \$5000 that his man would knock out Lavigne, but he found no takers. Both men scaled exactly 133 pounds.

I noticed that Walcott's color, instead of being ashy black, was grayish, a sure sign that the weight had weakened him, and I told Fitzpatrick what I thought of Walcott's condition.

"I purposely made the weight at the lightweight limit, believing it would weaken Walcott," replied Fitz.

The fight took place at Maspeh, L. I. There was a tremendous crowd present, and the light fingered gentry did a big business. At Smith, the late referee, fell a victim to the pickpockets and lost his watch in the scramble to get into the building.

Tim Hurst was referee. When the men came to the center of the ring the difference in condition was noticeably in favor of Lavigne.

In the very first round Lavigne started out to try for a knockout, and as Walcott had planned to attempt the same thing, you can imagine what a mix up took place. Never have I seen two men fight so fast or so much damage to each other in so short a time. Walcott was a real demon, and to my knowledge, no other man has ever taken such punishment as the "Kid" received in any ring contest around New York.

An odd thing was that there was not a single knockdown in the scheduled fifteen rounds. One moment Walcott would have Lavigne in a bad way, and the next instant the "Kid" would come back and batter the black boy to

the ropes. In the eighth round Walcott hit Lavigne on the ear, and that member swelled up until it was the size of a drum.

In the tenth round it looked bad for the "Kid," but he rallied from then on and gradually forged into the lead. During a terrific rally in Walcott's corner in the fourteen round the negro struck his head outside of the ropes in order to avoid punishment. The crowd thought Joe wanted to quit then and there, but Tom O'Dourke caught him back into the ring again. At the end of the fifteenth round the referee held up Lavigne's hand to indicate him the winner and the crowd went wild.

For fully three days following the fight the crowd went wild. Walcott was confined to his house, but even the great Joe Walcott was also in such bad shape that he was unable to appear in public for several days. It was a terrific fight, believe me!

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